



# A DATASET OF ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUS ADOPTION IN THE UNITED STATES

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## ABSTRACT

Transitioning to electric school buses (ESBs) from traditional diesel-powered school buses can reduce students' exposure to air pollution and decrease greenhouse gas emissions. School districts and private fleet operators around the United States are adopting electric school buses with increasing speed, but so far ESB adoption has not been tracked in a centralized, public way. WRI aims to create accessible data and analyses that can help school district staff, advocates, policymakers, and other stakeholders make evidence-based decisions and support the transition to ESBs. This technical note describes the methods used to create a first-of-its-kind dataset that tracks ESB adoption across the United States.

The dataset is organized primarily by school district and tracks the number of “committed” ESBs in each district. An ESB is considered “committed” starting when a school district or fleet operator has been awarded funding to purchase it, or has made a formal agreement to purchase it from a manufacturer or dealer. We would not consider an ESB “committed” if a school district or other fleet operator only stated that they plan to acquire ESBs. The dataset includes other details related to committed ESBs, such as the manufacturer and funding source(s). It also contains school district characteristics such as poverty, racial composition, and locale (urban, suburban, town, or rural), to enable wider analysis of the adoption of ESBs, including whether the transition to ESBs is happening equitably. ESB-related data were collected from a variety of publicly available sources, including news articles, school websites, industry publications, and social media posts. Other demographic and economic data come from reputable, public datasets, including the Environmental

## CONTENTS

Abstract.....	1
Motivation .....	2
Indicator and Source Selection Criteria .....	2
Data Description and Methods .....	3
Limitations .....	13
Appendix A. Data Description and Sources .....	15
Appendix B. 2019 and 2020 DERA School Bus Rebates – Electric Bus Summary.....	15
References .....	16
Acknowledgments.....	18
About the Authors .....	18
About WRI .....	18

*Technical notes document the research or analytical methodology underpinning a publication, interactive application, or tool.*

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The dataset described in this technical note is available at [https://datasets.wri.org/dataset/electric\\_school\\_bus\\_adoption](https://datasets.wri.org/dataset/electric_school_bus_adoption).

Protection Agency, U.S. Census, and National Center for Education Statistics. This dataset will be updated periodically over the life of WRI's Electric School Bus Initiative to include newly committed ESBs and additional indicators. This version of the dataset contains data through June 30, 2024.

## MOTIVATION

In recent years, the number of ESBs across the country has been growing rapidly, but ESB adoption is not being reported in a centralized, publicly accessible way. This dataset fills that gap and includes additional data that enable researchers, policymakers, and advocates to conduct their own analysis of ESB adoption based on school district characteristics such as average income, poverty level, racial composition, region, and locale (urban, suburban, town, or rural). This is the first step toward building a central hub for information on ESBs that will be complemented by innovative data combinations (e.g., scorecards, metrics, indices) and other information (e.g., case studies, community organizing tools, social connections) to help target users push to electrify school buses. This can inform policy evaluation, future policy design, research, and advocacy. We hope that the stakeholders who engage with this dataset will help us locate additional or improved information about ESB deployment that can be included in updates to the dataset.

## INDICATOR AND SOURCE SELECTION CRITERIA

### Indicator Selection Criteria

The following criteria guided our selection of indicators to include. These criteria were applied especially when developing the indicators in Category 4, “Socioeconomic and demographic characteristics,” but they also informed decisions about indicators in all other categories, since not all information about the characteristics of ESBs, characteristics of school bus fleets, school district administrative structures, and so on, are equally useful for the dataset’s target audience and intended purpose.

1. **Prevalent:** Indicators should be widely used in other work on related topics to enable comparison with other research, alignment with ESB funding criteria, and alignment with wider consensus on the most appropriate indicators to use on these topics. For example, in Category 4, we include indicators that

have been regularly used to assess school districts’ eligibility for federal funding for ESBs or other programs, such as percentage of children in poverty, which is used to assess eligibility for free and reduced school lunch and American Rescue Plan ESB funding.

2. **Curated:** Keeping in mind that we cannot predict all the ways stakeholders will want to use these data, this dataset should provide all of the information relevant to our expected use cases (see “Use Cases” section) without including so many indicators that it overwhelms nontechnical users or puts the burden on users to research and select indicators. For example, in Category 4, demographics should balance providing an adequately holistic understanding of socioeconomic and environmental health disparities and inequalities resulting from racism, wealth, geography, and other factors, but they do not need to include more than a few prevalent poverty-related indicators.
3. **Relevant to ESBs:** For health risk indicators, we selected indicators related to health issues that result from air pollutant exposure, since these are conditions that ESBs could improve. According to this criterion, we did not include factors such as water pollution, lead exposure, or proximity to Superfund sites. For indicators related to school bus fleets and school district administrative and geographic information, we included those that seemed most relevant to the adoption of ESBs, such as bus ownership structure and locale.

### Source Selection Criteria

The following criteria guided our selection of the sources used to build this dataset. A full list of data sources can be found in Table A1, available for download at <https://www.wri.org/research/technical-note-dataset-electric-school-bus-adoption-united-states>.

1. **Reputable:** Data should come from government sources or other reputable and widely used sources such as academic journals, well-regarded industry publications, or peer-reviewed sources from think tanks or nonprofits. Some data (mainly related to ESB commitments) are only available from less verifiable sources like news articles or school district press releases. In those cases, we cross-checked information across multiple sources wherever possible and deferred to the most reputable or detailed source.
2. **Appropriate scale:** Data should either be already available at the school district level or available at a

finer-grained resolution than the school district (i.e., census block group) so that it can be accurately scaled up to the school district level.

3. **Recent:** Data should be the most recent available, be regularly updated, and have been updated in the past three to five years.

## DATA DESCRIPTION AND METHODS

This section describes the contents of the dataset. It groups the data into eleven categories and, for each, provides information such as how they were collected and/or analyzed, how they can be interpreted, and why they were included (in relation to the above indicator selection criteria).

### Sheet 1. District-level Dataset on ESB Adoption

#### Category 1: School district characteristics

This category includes the base table of this dataset, which comes from the district directory of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for the 2022–23 school year. NCES is a federal entity responsible for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the United States. The directory lists the nation’s local education agencies (LEAs, which this technical note refers to as “school districts” for ease of understanding) by name and unique identification number (LEA ID). The U.S. Department of Education defines a local education agency as “a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools” (IDEA 2017).

The approximately 19,500 LEAs in the United States make up the rows of this dataset. There are nine types of LEAs, including several types of public education-related entities beyond what is typically referred to as a “school district,” such as a state-operated agency or a service agency (see Table 1). This ESB adoption dataset includes all LEA types because there may eventually be ESBs owned by any of these LEA types. The dataset also includes any other entities (without LEA IDs) that have obtained electric school buses (i.e., private schools and private fleet operators).

However, most LEAs are “regular public school districts that are not a component of a supervisory union” and most of the data related to school bus fleet characteristics, ESB fleet characteristics, and demographics (Categories 2–5 below) are associated with this type of LEA. This LEA type, along with “regular public school districts that are a component of a supervisory union,” are what are most often referred to as “school districts,” including in reference to there being roughly 13,500 school districts in the United States.

This category also contains data referring to geographic and administrative characteristics of the school district, including its address, location in various regional groupings, locale (urban, suburban, town, or rural), latitude and longitude coordinates, and others.

#### DATA SOURCE, COLLECTION METHOD, AND/OR ANALYSIS METHOD

School districts included in this dataset come from the NCES provisional directory of the 2022–23 LEA Universe Survey. All data in this category were available at the school district level, so no scaling or aggregation was necessary. See Table A1 for details.

This category, specifically the list of LEA IDs, served as the foundation for this dataset in that all other datasets were combined with the NCES LEA Directory using an XLOOKUP function in Excel that matched on LEA IDs. This was more effective than trying to match data to school districts based on name, since some school districts in different states have the same name, or are written differently in different contexts (e.g., Mt. Pleasant School District vs. Mount Pleasant School District).

#### Category 2: School bus fleet characteristics

These data consist of the school district’s overall school bus fleet characteristics, including the number of buses and ownership model.

#### DATA SOURCE, COLLECTION METHOD, AND/OR ANALYSIS METHOD

Data in this section, unless otherwise specified in the district’s “Sources” columns, comes from WRI’s “Dataset of U.S. School Bus Fleets” (Lazer et al. 2023). This dataset contains detailed information on the composition of school bus fleets of all fuel types in the United States, compiled from state-level governmental departments. Fleet data from 46 states and the District of Columbia are included, with data on more than 450,000 school buses and around 9,000 LEAs. Data on the total number of buses used by a district and whether a contractor is involved in their fleet were merged into the ESB Adoption Dataset using the XLOOKUP function in Microsoft Excel.

Table 1 | LEA Types and Definitions

TYPE CODE	TYPE NAME	DEFINITION
1	Regular public school district that is NOT a component of a supervisory union	Local government administrative authority that governs the education system at a specified local level on behalf of the public and the state that is not component of a supervisory union.
2	Regular public school district that is a component of a supervisory union	Local government administrative authority that governs the education system at a specified local level on behalf of the public and the state that is component of a supervisory union.
3	Supervisory union	Administrative center or county superintendent's office serving as the administrative center.
4	Service agency	Agency that does not operate schools and instead provides specialized educational services (such as career and technical education) or related services (such as services in individualized education programs, or IEPs) to other education agencies.
5	State agency	Organization overseen by a state agency that operates schools or programs that provide public elementary and/or secondary level instruction Federal operated agency that provides elementary and/or secondary level instruction.
6	Federal agency	Federal agency that provides elementary- and/or secondary-level instruction.
7	Independent charter district	Education unit created under the state charter legislation that is not under the administrative control of another local education agency and that operates one or more charter schools and only charter schools.
8	Other education agency	Education unit that does not fall within the definitions of the other existing LEA types.
9	Specialized public school district	School district that operates one or more schools that are designed for a specific educational need or purpose.

Source: Adapted from NCES (2021b).

All data in this category were available at the school district level, so no scaling or aggregation was necessary.

Category 3: Electric school bus fleet characteristics

These data include whether a school district has any committed electric school buses; if it does, the data include other information about those buses, such as the number of committed ESBs, the number of ESBs in each procurement stage (See “Sheet 2: Bus-level data”), government agencies, charging companies, and utilities involved. The data from Sheet 2 are aggregated up to the school district level from the more detailed data on ESB commitments collected at the individual bus level found in “Sheet 2: Bus-level data.” These data were collected by WRI and have not previously been published in a compiled format. This dataset does not include information on alternative-fuel buses other than electric buses, such as compressed natural gas (CNG) or propane buses.

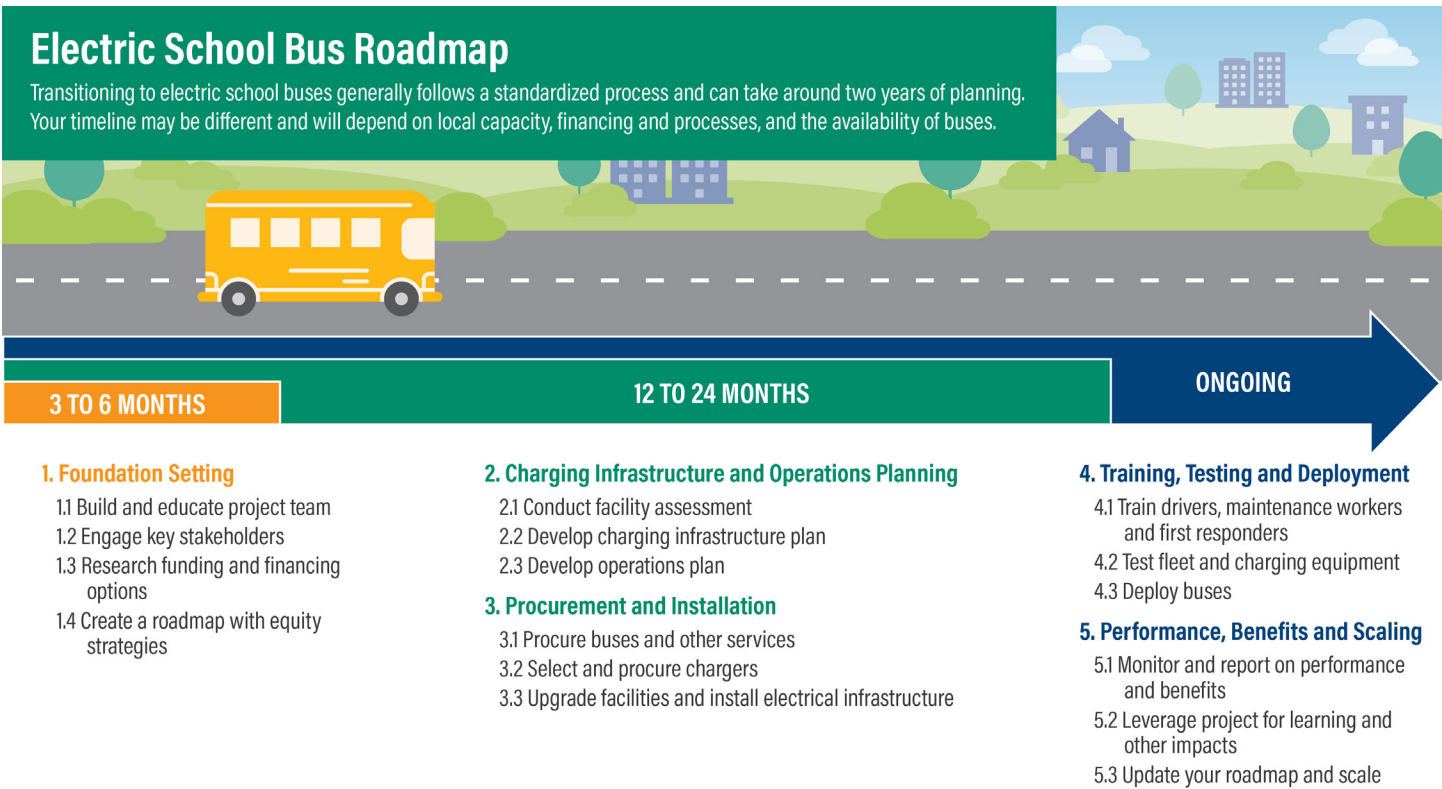
WHICH ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUSES ARE INCLUDED IN THIS DATASET?

The electric school bus adoption process consists of many phases, including visioning, technical preparations, awarding of government funding to purchase an ESB, placing an order, taking delivery of the bus, and using the bus to transport students, among others (see Figure 1). Before any of these steps are taken, some school districts may announce their intention to acquire ESBs, while other districts set long-term targets for full fleet electrifica-

tion. We therefore had to determine when in this process to include an ESB in this dataset. This dataset tracks “committed” ESBs.

- **Definition:** An ESB is considered “committed” when a school district or fleet operator has been awarded funding to purchase it, or has made a formal agreement to purchase it from a manufacturer or dealer. We would not consider an ESB “committed” if a school district or other fleet operator only expressed interest in ESBs or stated that they plan to acquire ESBs, without having been awarded funding or having reached a formal agreement with a third party.
- **Examples:** Examples of information that would lead to a designation of “committed” include a public announcement that a school district has been awarded funding from a federal school bus rebate program like the one created by the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA), or a news article stating that a school district has placed an order for ESBs from a manufacturer. An unsuccessful or pending funding application for ESBs, or a 2035 full-fleet electrification target that is not substantiated by funding or formal agreements, would not be considered “committed” (though it may be included in Category 6, “Expressions of interest in ESBs”).

Figure 1 | Electric School Bus Roadmap



Source: WRI (2022).

■ **Rationale:** We chose this starting point for considering an ESB “committed” for two main reasons: good data availability and to avoid overcounting. Relatively good data are available about when an ESB reaches this phase because there are official announcements when school districts and private fleet operators are awarded public funds for ESBs, and nearly all ESBs tracked to date are supported by public funds. We also chose this starting point because our research and school district engagement suggest that when an ESB reaches this phase of the adoption process, there is a step-change increase in the likelihood that it will continue advancing through the adoption process and be put into operation in due course. Therefore, this starting point helps avoid overcounting, giving a more accurate estimate of the ESB adoption.

DATA SOURCE, COLLECTION METHOD, AND/OR ANALYSIS METHOD  
See “Sheet 2: Bus-level data” for the sources and collection methods of these data.

**Category 4: Socioeconomic and demographic characteristics**

These data describe the social, economic, and demographic characteristics of the school district. As described in “Indicator Selection Criteria,” we tried to include data that would provide an adequately holistic understanding of socioeconomic and environmental health condition disparities among school districts, in alignment with wider thinking on the topic and what is relevant to ESBs, without including so many indicators that they burden nontechnical users with researching and selecting indicators. This section includes data on each school district’s number of enrolled students, whether the district is controlled by an Indian Tribe or the Bureau of Indian Education (Bureau of Indian Education n.d.), median household income, percentage of households below the federal poverty level, and the distribution of the population among race and ethnic categories.



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#### DATA SOURCE, COLLECTION METHOD, AND/OR ANALYSIS METHOD

These data were sourced from NCES, which draws on U.S. Census data to publish these demographic, social, and economic data at the school district level.

### Category 5: Environmental justice and health

This section includes five variables that are the result of WRI analysis and have not previously been published at the school district level (to the best of the authors' knowledge): percent low-income, percent non-white and/or Hispanic, average ozone concentration (parts per billion, ppb), average concentration of fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>, measured in micrograms per cubic meter,  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) and the average rate of asthma among adults aged 18 and older. This section also includes the percent of students in each district with a disability, data on whether the district qualified for various funding sources, and whether WRI considers the school district a priority outreach district (POD), defined in the next section. Together with the data from Category 4, the data in this section can be used to understand the extent to which ESBs are being adopted equitably among school districts with differing racial and economic characteristics and with different pollution burdens.

#### DATA SOURCE, COLLECTION METHOD, AND/OR ANALYSIS METHOD

Percent low-income is defined as the percent of households with a household income less than or equal to twice the federal poverty level. Percent non-white and/or Hispanic is defined as percent of individuals who identified as anything other than "white alone" and Non-Hispanic on the American Community Survey. Average ozone concentration is defined as summer seasonal average of daily maximum 8-hour ozone concentration in air (ppb). Average PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentration is defined as annual average concentration of PM<sub>2.5</sub> fine particulate matter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ).

These four variables were based on data from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s Environmental Justice Screening tool, 2023 release (EPA 2023b), which collects data from various sources, including the U.S. Census. Census block groups were associated with a school district (LEAID) based on the Geographic Relationship Files published by NCES (NCES 2024c). All variables were calculated as the population-weighted average of the values for all census block groups within the school district's geographic boundaries for which data were available. If a census block group was included in multiple school districts, it was included in the averages for all of those school districts.

Using the four variables described above (percent low-income, percent non-white and/or Hispanic, average ozone concentration and average PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentration), WRI created lists of Priority Outreach Districts (PODs) as a starting point for outreach to ensure that we are working to bring the benefits of school bus electrification to the students who would gain the most from a clean ride to school. WRI offers PODs deep technical assistance at no cost. First, the four equity indicators were applied to school districts at a national level. School districts were designated national PODs if they either 1) were in the top quartile nationwide for percent low-income, were in the top quartile for percent non-white and/or Hispanic, and were in the top quartile for either average ozone concentration or average PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentration, or 2) were tribal districts. All tribal districts were included as national PODs because data was not available to estimate their values for the above criteria. The analysis resulted in 1,007 national PODs across 38 states.

Next, the four equity indicators were applied to school districts in each state to ensure there would be at least one POD in each state to assist with all active ESB programs. School districts were designated as state PODs if they either 1) were in the top quartile statewide for percent low-income, were in the top quartile for percent non-white and/or Hispanic, and were in the top quartile for either average ozone concentration or average PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentration, or 2) were tribal districts. All tribal districts in each state were included in state POD lists because data was not available to estimate their values for the above criteria. The state-level analysis yielded 932 PODs across the fifty states, D.C., USVI, Guam, Puerto Rico, Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa and all tribal nations. Of those, 431 were already identified as PODs in the national list. Therefore, 501 new PODs were identified in this state-level update and added to the overall POD list, expanding it from 1,007 to 1,508 districts. Note that both lists use data from the 2021 release of EPA's Environmental Justice Screening tool.

Several factors influenced the focus on these characteristics. Low-income communities and black and brown communities have faced historic disinvestment and under-resourcing, and black and brown communities often bear the brunt of harmful on-road air pollution (Union of Concerned Scientists 2019). PM<sub>2.5</sub> or ozone pollution levels help identify districts with the most acute need for clean-running electric school buses. Evidence

suggests Native American children disproportionately suffer from health conditions linked to air pollution, such as asthma (Wen et al. 2019).

The list of PODs was created to guide equity-focused outreach, not to serve as a comprehensive analysis of the extent of the disinvestment, discrimination, or historic under-resourcing that school districts or communities have experienced. Other limitations of this methodology include that school district-level averages can mask heterogeneity within districts, and that the characteristics of students that ride school buses may differ from socioeconomic characteristics of the school district's total population.

The variable “Percent of school children with a disability” comes from NCES, which draws on U.S. Census data to publish these demographic, social, and economic data at the school district level.

The variable “Current asthma among adults aged 18 and older” is based on PLACES data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC 2022). Census tracts were associated with a school district (LEAID) based on the Geographic Relationship Files published by NCES (NCES 2024c). It was calculated as the population-weighted average of the values for all census tract within the school district's geographic boundaries for which data were available. If a census tract was included in multiple school districts, it was included in the averages for all those school districts.

Category 6: Expressions of interest in ESBs

This category includes data that could help identify school districts that have expressed interest in ESBs or environmental sustainability, or school districts in cities or towns that have expressed interest in electric public vehicles. These include whether, to our knowledge, the school district previously applied for funding for ESBs but was not awarded that funding, whether the city where the school district is located is a member of the Climate Mayors Electric Vehicle Purchasing Collaborative, and whether the school district has made a sustainability commitment. A sustainability commitment can refer to several types of commitments, such as membership in the Green Schools National Network or Schools for Climate Action. We also indicate if the school district has a Generation 180 Solar School and if the district is participating in Trust for Public Land's Active Community Schoolyard Program. See Table A1 for details.

DATA SOURCE, COLLECTION METHOD, AND/OR ANALYSIS METHOD

Once an indicator was selected, the data were collected from the website of the relevant program or commitment and manually entered into the corresponding cells. Some of these indicators were already at the school district level, such as the Green Schools National Network, in which case no scaling or aggregation was necessary. Data on a school district's participation with Generation180 and Trust for Public Land were provided directly from the respective organizations.

Some indicators were at the city level, such as the Climate Mayors Electric Vehicle Purchasing Collaborative, in which case we associated the commitment with the school district(s) in that city.

Category 7: Sources

This category includes links to sources that are not included in Table A1, such as unawarded applications for ESB funding (Category 6) and groups involved in ESB adoption (Category 3).

Sheet 2. Bus-level data

This sheet includes detailed information on ESB commitments at the individual bus level. Unlike the district-level sheet, each row of this table represents a single ESB, identified by a “Bus ID” that was assigned based on the bus operator's LEA ID (See Table A1 for details). This data structure enables us to capture elements that would be difficult or confusing to demonstrate at the district level. This sheet includes the most recently known adoption stage of the bus as well as the quarter, known and estimated, that the bus entered each stage. We note to which “batch” (see definition in following paragraph) each school bus belongs. The table also contains bus characteristics, funding sources and amounts, and bus charger information. Finally, each ESB includes the date of the most recent source that we have found and links to the sources of the adoption data.

ESB BATCHES

A “batch” is a group of ESBs from a single school district that went through the adoption process at the same time. ESBs are in the same batch, numbered chronologically, if any of their time-series data (when they were awarded, ordered, delivered, or first operating) occurred in the same quarter or in adjacent quarters (i.e. 2020 Q1 and 2020 Q2). We used the following methodology to assign ESBs to batches.

Table 2 | Batch data example 1

0A. BUS ID	1B. LEA OR ENTITY NAME	3P. QUARTER AWARDED	3Q. QUARTER ORDERED	3R. QUARTER DELIVERED	3S. QUARTER FIRST OPERATING	3O. BATCH
5100090-1	ALBEMARLE CO PBLC SCHS	2021 Q2	2022 Q2			1
5100090-2	ALBEMARLE CO PBLC SCHS	2021 Q2	2022 Q2			1
5100090-3	ALBEMARLE CO PBLC SCHS	2022 Q1				2
5100090-4	ALBEMARLE CO PBLC SCHS	2022 Q1				2

Source: Authors.

1. If a district has only one ESB, there can only be one batch, therefore the assigned batch is “1.”
2. If a district has more than one ESB, we first assigned districts in which every bus had time series data in the same stage (i.e. all buses had time series data for either “Awarded,” “Ordered,” “Delivered,” or “Operating”). We compared the time series within the same stage, not across stages, starting with the “awarded” stage. All buses have a known or estimated awarded stage based on the methodology described in the next section on time series estimations.
  - In the example in Table 2a, Albemarle County Public Schools has 4 buses, and we know the quarter awarded for each bus. By comparing the dates in column 3p using the criteria described above, buses 5100090-1 and 5100090-2 are in the first batch, and buses 5100090-3 and 5100090-4 are in the second batch.

#### Other considerations:

- If more than 2 buses have sequential time series data in a given stage (i.e. 3 buses awarded in 2020 Q1, 2020 Q2, 2020 Q3), we assigned all to the same batch.
- Each batch belongs to only one entity; there are no batches that contain buses from more than one district.

The batch variable was designed to approximate the perspective of the school district or fleet operator. It can serve as an input to analyses that answer questions like: do school districts typically pilot a few ESBs and then scale

up their ESB fleet? Are there differences between states in terms of the size and frequency of ESB batches? What is the average time between batches and how is it changing?

#### ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUS ADOPTION DATASET ESTIMATION METHODOLOGY

The Dataset of Electric School Bus Adoption in the United States is often quoted as the authoritative source for tracking data on electric school bus (ESB) adoption nationwide. It tracks ESBs through four stages of the adoption process. These are:

1. **Awarded:** A fleet operator is awarded funds, most often from a public entity, to purchase an ESB.
2. **Ordered:** The fleet operator submits an order with a bus dealer to purchase an ESB.
3. **Delivered:** The ESB arrives at the fleet operator’s bus depot, yard, or other transportation hub.
4. **Operating:** The ESB is now used on regular routes transporting students.

Historically, the ESB Initiative indicated the quarter (for instance, 2021 Q4) that the ESB was awarded, ordered, delivered and first operating when the data were publicly available. This enables tracking of the time it takes buses to reach each stage of adoption and tracking the number of buses at different stages by quarter. The most recent known adoption stage is indicated as “Current status of bus.” If there is no known publicly available data, these fields are left blank.



Table 3 | Median Number of Quarters between Adoption Periods

TIME PERIOD	AWARDED TO ORDERED	AWARDED TO DELIVERED	AWARDED TO IN OPERATION	ORDERED TO DELIVERED	ORDERED TO IN OPERATION	DELIVERED TO IN OPERATION
Early (2014-2018)	1 quarter (n=9)	7 quarters (n=30)	(n=4)	5 quarters (n=10)	(n=3)	1 quarters (n=7)
Middle/COVID (2019-2021)	3 quarters (n=19)	5 quarters (n=94)	6 quarters (n=22)	4 quarters (n=17)	5 quarters (n=7)	1 quarter (n=19)
Clean School Bus Program and After (2022-2023)	1 quarter (n=145)	3 quarters (n=72)	(n=3)	2 quarters (n=113)	(n=2)	0 quarters (n=7)

Source: Authors.

However, the amount of missing data presents an incomplete picture of ESB adoption nationwide and several limitations for secondary analyses. Information for each stage of ESB adoption is not always released publicly, creating a significant knowledge gap.

Currently, there is enough public data to, in combination with internal research and a set of assumptions, provide quarterly estimates for ESBs through the four stages of the adoption process. This document explains how the estimations were developed and applied in the dataset for unknown adoption stages.

#### *How the estimations were calculated*

First, for the bus-level data in the adoption dataset (current through November 2023), each bus observation was categorized into a relevant year determined by the year of earliest adoption stage that is observed. Any bus observation without information on when the bus was adopted is excluded from this estimation analysis.

Second, to reduce bias from larger orders from single school districts in the same quarter, we reduced the dataset to single bus observations per district per time period. This was done by deduplicating the dataset so that each school district and adoption stage observations were represented only once, regardless of the number of buses.

Third, the dataset was further categorized into three time periods, where years were clustered together based on overall trends in electric school bus adoption. This was also done to reduce the bias of smaller fluctuations year to year. The three time periods were categorized based on increases in overall volume of buses in any adoption stage:

1. Early, 2014 – 2018;
2. Middle/COVID, 2019 – 2021
3. The Clean School Bus Program and after, 2022 – present

Fourth, using existing data within each of these time periods, the median number of quarters between each pair of adoption stages (awarded to ordered, awarded to delivered, awarded to in operation, ordered to delivered, ordered to in operation, and delivered to in operation) were calculated. Calculations were done separately for each time period. Instances where there were fewer than five observations for the pair of adoption stages were excluded from use in the estimation process.

The following table summarizes those observed time periods, with those in red excluded as there were fewer than five observations.

#### *How the estimations were applied*

The above data were added to the adoption dataset to fill in missing time periods for every adoption stage for each ESB. The estimations were only applied for unknown adoption stages. For example, if we knew a bus was first awarded in 2020 Q1 but we did not know when it was ordered, we counted forward three quarters and assigned the estimated ordered date to 2020 Q4. If we knew a bus was awarded in 2018 Q1 and ordered in 2018 Q4, we did not adjust the ordered date to align with the estimation formula. The publicly available data superseded all estimations. In this example, we only counted forward seven quarters from 2018 Q1 to estimate a delivered date.

There were several rules, assumptions, and exceptions applied throughout the estimation process. They are as follows:

- Estimates were not applied if the date of the most recent data source is within the current or previous quarter from the present. The reasoning is that we have up-to-date, publicly available information and should not assume the bus has moved through other stages.
- Estimations were not applied if the estimation placed the bus's adoption status in the future (2024 Q2 or later).
- Estimations were extrapolated from the awarded date for consistency across estimations and chronological purposes. For example, if a bus was first awarded in 2019 Q1 and we wanted to estimate when it was ordered and delivered, we counted forward three quarters from 2019 Q1 to assign an ordered date and counted forward five quarters from 2019 Q1 to assign a delivered date.
  - If a bus was committed but had no publicly available awarded data, we extrapolated a quarterly estimate for the awarded stage from the year of the earliest data source that mentioned the bus. For example, if the data source year was 2021, then the awarded estimation was assigned as 2021 Q1.
- Some estimations were not applied to buses from certain funding sources that provide regular data updates, specifically the EPA's Clean School Bus Program and the School Bus Replacement Program run by the California Energy Commission.
  - The Clean School Bus Program provides data on ESB awarded, ordered and delivered dates. The unknown data for these three stages were not estimated, and instead will be completed when expected data is obtained. If the delivered date was known for a CSBP funded bus, an operating date was estimated.
  - The School Bus Replacement Program provides data on ESB awarded and delivered dates. The unknown data for these two stages were not estimated, and instead will be completed when expected data is obtained. If the awarded and delivered dates were known, ordered and operating dates were estimated.
- Occasionally our methods produced anachronistic estimations, meaning an ESB was estimated as operating before it was delivered, or delivered before it was ordered, and so forth due to a mix of estimated dates and sourced dates throughout the adoption process. This occurred for 67 ESBs (.01% of all committed ESBs) when estimations were first applied in January 2024. Through observation, it was noted that these ESBs moved through the adoption process very quickly, which may account for the incorrect estimations.
  - For these buses, we corrected the chronological order on a case-by-case basis by applying the most recent publicly available source date to the anachronistic, estimated date. For example, if a bus had estimated adoption dates for awarded through delivered stages of 2013 Q1, 2013 Q2, 2015 Q1, but a publicly sourced operating date of 2014 Q2, then we changed the delivered date from 2015 Q1 to 2014 Q2. For another example, if a bus had publicly sourced awarded and delivered dates of 2021 Q2 and 2021 Q3 and estimated ordered and operating dates of 2022 Q1 and 2021 Q4, then we changed the anachronistic ordered and operating dates to 2021 Q3.
- When a new ESB is discovered to be delivered or operating that we were previously unaware of, the most recent publicly available source date denoting its delivered or operational status is added to the dataset. Absent any earlier adoption stage data in the dataset for this new bus, we count backwards based on the observed time periods in Table 1 to estimate relevant earlier adoption stage dates; awarded, ordered, and/or delivered.

#### DATA SOURCE, COLLECTION METHOD, AND/OR ANALYSIS METHOD

As there is no known public, centrally available dataset on ESB adoption, we used Google with the search term “electric school bus” (quotes included) to find sources that reported ESBs that had been committed, including news articles, school websites, social media posts, government funding announcements, and datasets from government or nonprofit entities. We also gathered some information from correspondence with our partners, which we confirmed with published sources wherever possible. The sources for ESB adoption are listed at the end of the row of each fleet operator, as indicated in Category 7 of Table A1. Once we completed a comprehensive initial collection of ESB adoption data, new ESBs were identified using Google news alerts with “electric school bus”

to receive notifications of news related to ESB adoptions. We also tracked the disbursement of funds from major ESB funding opportunities, such as the Volkswagen Diesel Emissions Environmental Mitigation Trust (n.d.) and the EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act rebates and grants (EPA n.d.a.).

### Sheet 3. State school bus fleets

#### Category 8: State school bus fleet data

This section compiles school bus fleet data at the state level. It includes the total number of school buses in each state, the number of committed ESBs in each state, and the percentage of the statewide school bus fleet that is electric. It also contains data on the approximate number of students riding ESBs, the number of students who use the school bus as their primary mode of transportation, whether the state has a pupil transportation requirement, and the pupil transportation funding method.

##### DATA SOURCE, COLLECTION METHOD, AND/OR ANALYSIS METHOD

We include three sources, School Bus Fleet Magazine (2023) the Federal Highway Administration (2023), and WRI's dataset of U.S. school bus fleets (Lazer et al. 2023) for the total number of school buses in each state. The total number of ESBs per state is based on the number of committed ESBs recorded in Sheet 1. We calculated the percentage of the state school bus fleet that is electric using these same sources, as well as school bus registration data from Atlas EV Hub (2019). The data on primary modes of transportation to school come from the National Household Travel Survey (Federal Highway Administration 2017). The data on pupil transportation requirements and funding come from various sources that are listed in Sheet 3.

### Sheet 4. Utilities

#### Category 9: Utility data

This category includes information on the electric power utilities operating in each school district. The "Utility name" variables include the names of all utility companies that operate within the boundaries of the school district. Variables covering the possible utility ownership structures include "Cooperative ownership," "Municipal ownership," "Investor ownership," and the like. These variables indicate whether any utility of the specified ownership model operates anywhere in the school district. For example, a "Yes" under "Cooperative ownership" indicates that one or more cooperative electric power utilities

operate in that school district. The "RTO/ISO variable" indicates which regional transmission organization or independent system operator serves that school district. Additional research is underway to determine which utilities serve the schools and bus depots in each school district, since some school districts have multiple electric power utilities, meaning that different utilities could serve school buildings and bus depots.

##### DATA SOURCE, COLLECTION METHOD, AND/OR ANALYSIS METHOD

Spatial data on utility company boundaries in 2020 was sourced from Homeland Infrastructure Foundation-Level Data (HIFLD 2020). GIS analysis was conducted using these shapefiles and shapefiles of school districts from the 2019-20 school year (NCES 2020) to determine which utility service areas intersect with which school districts. The resulting dataset was exported from ArcGIS as a spreadsheet and merged into this dataset using an XLOOKUP Excel function based on LEA IDs.

### Sheet 5. Counties

#### Category 10: County data

This category lists all the counties that intersect with each school district. Some school districts are entirely contained within one county, but more than 4,000 LEAs contain two or more counties. These data are important because certain funding opportunities, datasets, or decision-making powers relevant to ESBs are at the county level and not the school district level. School districts that contain more than one county are listed in multiple rows. For example, a district that contains two counties will appear in two rows, one with three counties will appear in three rows, and so on. Where school districts contain more than one county, the order of the counties listed with each school district is not meaningful (i.e., the county with the most area in the school district is not necessarily listed first).

##### DATA SOURCE, COLLECTION METHOD, AND/OR ANALYSIS METHOD

These data come from the school district Geographic Relationship Files published by NCES, which list the counties associated with each school district (NCES 2024c). For school districts not included in the Geographic Relationship Files, we used the county listed in the NCES school locations & geoassignments file for public school districts for the 2022–23 school year (NCES 2024d).

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## Sheet 6. Congressional districts

### Category 11: Congressional district data

This category lists all of the congressional districts that exist within a school district, as well as the number of congressional districts that are within the LEA, if known. Similar to Sheet 5, school districts appear in as many rows as the number of congressional districts that they contain. The order in which congressional districts are listed with a school district is not meaningful.

#### DATA SOURCE, COLLECTION METHOD, AND/OR ANALYSIS METHOD

These data come from the School District Geographic Relationship Files published by NCES, which list the congressional districts associated with each school district (NCES 2024c). For school districts not included in the Geographic Relationship Files, we used the congressional district listed in the NCES school locations & geoassignments file for public school districts for the 2022–23 school year (NCES 2024d).

The estimated number of K-12 public-school students riding electric school buses in the US is calculated using state-level ridership and school bus fleet size numbers from School Bus Fleet Magazine (2023). The number of public K-12 students transported daily on school buses in each state is divided by the number of school buses in each state to determine the average number of students riding the bus in each state. This value is then multiplied by the number of delivered or operating electric school buses in the state. This electric school bus data comes from this adoption dataset described in this technical note. Due to missing or incomplete data for Colorado, Oklahoma, and Mississippi, the nation-wide average per-bus ridership was used for these states, multiplied by the number of delivered or operating electric school buses in each state. Note this methodology is extremely limited by available data and does not reflect the true variance in school bus ridership due to factors such as individual school district decisions about routing, buses being used for multiple routes, buses serving multiple schools per day, and others that determine the true count of students riding electric school buses.

## USE CASES

A main value-add of this dataset is its compilation and organization of data on ESBs (Category 3) in a useful, cohesive structure that enables comparison between school districts and with other datasets (such as U.S. Census or other demographic data). Many users may want to

filter the data to identify only school districts with ESBs, and then filter or sort based on other characteristics. This could answer questions such as “How are ESBs distributed across school districts of different income levels or racial compositions?” or “How are ESBs distributed across different regions of the country, states, or urban and rural areas?” Users can also take a deeper look into data trends in the bus-level sheet to answer questions such as “What funding sources have been used most frequently to fund ESBs?”, “How many committed buses are from a given operator?”, or “How many buses were awarded in the fourth quarter of 2020?” This data can also be used to better understand the rate of adoption of ESBs in a given school district—including, for example, if they piloted a few buses and then scaled up by ordering many more.

This dataset includes all school districts, not only school districts with ESBs, to enable comparisons between school districts with ESBs and the wider universe of school districts, such as “Do school districts with ESBs have a higher percentage of people of color than the average school district?”

## Examples of Use Cases

- A staff member or student in a school district is trying to find information about how their school district compares to others with regard to sustainability and equity outcomes. They would use this information to assess the feasibility of transition to ESBs based on their similarity to other school districts with ESBs or to advocate for cleaner bus fleets if similar schools have been able to make the change.
- A journalist is looking for the most up-to-date data on ESB adoption in the United States and wants to run analyses that compare ESB adoption against other indicators, such as air pollution exposure of children. The journalist would use the data to write a piece on the case for ESBs from a health perspective.
- A congressional staffer wants to know how the district or state of their member of Congress compares to others when it comes to ESB adoption. That staffer would use the data to advocate for full appropriations of zero-emissions school bus funding allocated in federal legislation, such as the 2021 infrastructure bill and/or the Reconciliation bill.
- ESB advocates working at the local, state, or federal government level want to know characteristics of their school bus fleet and how many are ESBs. They would use the data to create a snapshot of the current



status in order to bolster efforts to write ESB-friendly policy. They can also see which congressional districts overlap with their school district so that they can determine which congressmembers to contact.

We see very limited potential for misuse of these data or use of the data for efforts not aligned with the goals of WRI's Electric School Bus Initiative. It may be possible to use these data to advocate against the use of public funding to support ESB adoption, if ESB adoption is not deemed to be widespread, equitable, or cost-effective enough to justify the investment. It may also be possible for an advocate or school district or state official to use these data to argue against the adoption of ESBs in their jurisdiction (i.e., to argue for other alternative-fuel buses like propane or CNG) if they deem there to be insufficient nationwide piloting or use of ESBs. We anticipate that these risks will decrease as the number of ESBs committed and in operation increases in the 2020s.

## LIMITATIONS

### Limitations in Data Availability (Data Gaps)

A current major data gap regards school bus fleet characteristics at the school district level. While WRI's "Dataset of U.S. School Bus Fleets" has filled this gap for many districts' total fleet size and use of a private fleet operator, there are still many districts where this data is unknown. There are also gaps in socioeconomic data relating to some LEA types like charter schools and tribal schools, and in the socioeconomic characteristics of school districts served by ESBs that are owned by a private fleet operator, in cases where we do not know where those ESBs operate.

Quarters are used to track ESB adoption stages because sources often do not include specific dates. Very few of the ESBs that are listed in Sheet 2 have a known quarter for each of the four commitment stages. It is uncommon for news outlets, districts, or dealers to announce each stage, leading to gaps in our knowledge of the full adoption timeline of every ESB. For example, an ESB delivery may be covered by local news or announced on a school district website, but the date that the bus first began operating on regular routes was not. Sometimes sources may also mention the status of the bus without indicating the specific time period that the bus entered that stage.

## Uncertainty and Potential Bias

Data on the number and location of electric school buses in the United States were aggregated from hundreds of news articles, funding announcements, press releases, and other disparate online sources. This method of data collection is a source of uncertainty in the dataset. We are unable to quantify the amount of uncertainty; this section explains where and how error may have been introduced, how that impacts the use of the findings, how we are working to counteract that source of uncertainty, and how users might counteract that uncertainty in their use of the data.

- **Outdated information:** The real-world situation may have changed since the source was published (as is the case with any static dataset). To counteract this uncertainty, users can search for additional or more recent sources about ESBs in particular districts of interest. We intend to update the dataset periodically to limit the accumulation of out-of-date information across the entire dataset. Additionally, WRI recently published an interactive data dashboard that is updated on a monthly basis. This can be found at <https://electricschoolbusinitiative.org/electric-school-bus-data-dashboard>.
- **Omitted information:** Given the disparate and numerous sources used to collect these data, the dataset may inadvertently omit ESBs (or details about ESBs) for which data are publicly available. We hope that the publication of this dataset will lead users to provide WRI with missing information that can be included in updates.
- **Unknown location of buses owned by private fleet operators:** Several private fleet operators have committed to ESBs. Some of these operators serve school districts around the country, and in some cases, there is not information about where the ESBs will operate. In such cases, the ESBs are listed as owned by the fleet operator, but no associated geographic or demographic information is provided. This means the school buses are included in the total number of ESBs and number of entities with ESBs (and in some cases in the count of ESBs by funding source), but they would not be represented in analyses of the distribution of ESBs by region, income, and so forth. To counteract this uncertainty, the Electric School Bus Initiative is working to build partnerships with fleet operators so that, among other things, we can access more accurate information on the school

districts that these ESBs serve. As we learn about the location of these ESBs, updates to this dataset will list those ESBs with the school district they serve, and the fleet operator will be noted in the school district's "Fleet operator" column.

- **Double-counting of school buses owned by private fleet operators:** In other cases, we may have information that the ESBs owned by a private fleet operator will serve a given school district. However, some school districts have a hybrid model of school bus ownership where they own some buses and contract with a private operator for others. Given the fragmented nature of information available, this could potentially lead to double-counting. For example, a news article from the local newspaper covering a school district may indicate that the district is "getting" a certain number of ESBs, while funding allocation announcements (for example, from the EPA's DERA program) may state that the fleet operator will be purchasing those same buses. This could potentially lead to the same bus(es) being listed under both the school district and the fleet operator. To counteract this uncertainty, the Electric School Bus Initiative is working to build partnerships with fleet operators so that, among other things, we can access more accurate information on the school districts that these ESBs serve. As we learn about the location of these ESBs, updates to this dataset will list those ESBs with the school districts they serve, and the fleet operator will be noted in the school district's "Fleet operator" column.

## Consistency among Data Sources

This dataset draws from multiple data sources that differ in their method, time of publication, and other characteristics. Combining these to produce new insights presents a potential quality risk. We used the criteria described in "Indicator Selection Criteria" (Section 2) to ensure that all the data are as consistent, accurate, and fit for purpose as possible. We also describe the limitations of this dataset above, and include information in Table A1 that informs users of the specific characteristics and caveats of each included dataset.

## Comprehensiveness of Indicators

The social, economic, environmental, and demographic data included in this dataset are ones that we determined to be relevant and robust, but they are by no means comprehensive. A nuanced understanding of the disadvantages or environmental injustices a community has experienced would require a wider array of information on topics such as exposure to various pollutants, health outcomes, access to services, employment, the policy and historical context, and many others. It would also benefit from a look at spatial scales larger and smaller than the school district level. However, we hope that the data provided here can help identify areas for further research. Updates to this dataset may include additional social, economic, environmental, and demographic indicators.

## APPENDIX A. DATA DESCRIPTION AND SOURCES

### Descriptions of Major Sources

- **The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)** is an entity of the U.S. Department of Education responsible for “collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and other nations.” Many of the data are updated yearly and presented in Excel or comma-separated value files at the school, district, and state levels, based on U.S. Census data. We collected data from NCES largely at the district level and use its district identifier number, known as a local education agency (LEA) ID, to ensure accurate data merging and tracking.
- *School Bus Fleet* is a pupil transportation trade publication that releases various surveys and statistics.
- **Homeland Infrastructure Foundation-Level Data (HIFLD)** is a public-domain website containing a variety of nationwide geospatial data. We used this source to determine utility boundaries so we could see how they overlap with school district boundaries using GIS analysis.

Table A1, available for download at <https://www.wri.org/research/technical-note-dataset-electric-school-bus-adoption-united-states>, contains a detailed list of all variables in the dataset with explanations and sources.

## APPENDIX B. 2019 AND 2020 DERA SCHOOL BUS REBATES – ELECTRIC BUS SUMMARY

WRI received the following information on the 2019 and 2020 DERA electric school bus rebates as a response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Request submitted to the EPA in November 2021. This information is included as an appendix here because it is included in the dataset and not publicly available elsewhere.

### 2019 Selectees (1 bus total)

- Reynolds School District #7 (OR) – 1 ZEV bus
  - \$20,000 paid out for ZEV bus
  - 2020 Blue Bird

### 2020 Selectees: (20 buses total)

- Center Unified School District (CA) – 5 ZEV buses
  - o \$300,000 to be paid out
  - o 2021 Lion buses
- Elk Grove Unified School District (CA) – 4 ZEV buses
  - \$260,000 to be paid out
  - 2021 Lion buses
- River Delta Unified School District (CA) – 4 ZEV buses
  - \$260,000 to be paid out
  - 2021 Lion buses
- Robla School District (CA) – 1 ZEV bus o \$65,000 to be paid out
  - 2021 Lion bus
- School District of Philadelphia (PA) – 2 ZEV buses
  - \$130,000 to be paid out for ZEV buses
  - Lion buses
- Berkeley Unified School District (CA) – 4 ZEV buses
  - Note: Fleet is no longer participating in the 2020 Rebates

### 2020 Waitlist: (28 buses total)

- Burnett Transit (WI) – 1 ZEV bus for \$65,000
- Pajaro Valley Unified School District (CA) – 5 ZEV buses for \$300,000
- Esparto Unified School District (CA) – 1 ZEV bus for \$65,000
- Shawnee Heights USD-450 (KS) – 2 ZEV buses for \$130,000
- Fairfax County Public Schools - APP 2 (VA) – 4 ZEV buses for \$260,000
- School District of Philadelphia (PA) – 2 ZEV buses \$130,000
- Salt Lake City School District (UT) – 4 ZEV buses for \$260,000
- Escondido Union High School District (CA) – 2 ZEV buses for \$130,000
- Steamboat Springs School District (CO) – 1 ZEV bus for \$65,000
- Fairfax County Public Schools – APP 1 (VA) – 4 ZEV buses for 260,000
- Croton-Harmon UFSD (NY) – 2 ZEV buses for \$130,000

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